

**HHU Parent Advisory Committee to School Committee
Meeting 3
November 23, 2015
High School Library 1938 Room**

The third meeting of the HHU Parent Advisory Committee to the School Committee was called to order at approximately 7:04 pm. Matt Kelley called the SC meeting to order; Lisa Hicks called the PAC meeting to order.

In attendance: Facilitator Lisa Hicks; School Committee Chair Matt Kelley, Vice Chair Wendy Paul, Secretary Sharon Gray and member Tony Bent; Superintendent David Lussier; Assistant Superintendent Judy Belliveau; Karen Briggs and Tam Kennedy from Bates; Jessica Graham from Fiske; Maria Davis and Ingrid Houghton from Hardy; Michael Batka and Sarah Kulka from Hunnewell; Beth Willett from Upham; Meghan LeBlanc and Jenn Fallon from PAWS; Jackie Hoglund and Julie Crafton from Schofield; Brook Rosenbaum and Michael Rodman from Sprague. Traffic Consultant- Kien Ho of BETA
Absent: Patti Quigley, Kristen Whitaker from Upham, Lou Madge

AGENDA REVIEW

Ms. Hicks reviewed the agenda and then asked if there were any questions or suggestions. None were raised.

APPROVAL OF Minutes – November 18, 2015

HHU PAC - Mr. Rosenbaum and Mr. Rodman made a motion to approve the minutes as amended, Ms. Fallon seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

SC – Ms. Paul made a motion to accept the minutes as amended, Mr. Bent seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Presentation (Continued from November 18, 2015 meeting)

David Lussier and Judy Belliveau

History on Neighborhood Schools and Assumptions

Elementary enrollment has been declining since 2008 (2,500 students to 2,307 students). Actually, 1975 was the last time enrollments hit 2,500

Challenges of current Enrollment / Attendance Zones/ School Capacity:

- School size disparity
- Class size disparities within and across schools
- Closure of grade levels due to enrollment – 5 or 6 grade levels closed this year
- Loss of specialized spaces (music/art)
- 2 years ago looked at redistricting – wouldn't solve the elementary schools' problems
- Solution – Reassigning families to schools

Data on Enrollment Projections – CropperGIS forecast

Adjusted forecast to factor in 30 teardowns and increasing rate of home sales
2023-24 enrollment forecast is less than 2,000 which is 500 less than the proposed 2,500 student capacity

Feasibility Study phase will include an update to the forecast to be sure factors still hold

Attendance Zones – distributed the current attendance zone maps with an overlay

Dark purple lines show what zones were before 2001

The Sprague School was not open, therefore their current zone was spread among Hunnewell, Schofield, Fiske and Hardy

Capacity of Sprague – 418 students, close to 100% capacity

Neighborhood schools are an important aspect of the Wellesley Public Schools system and is an important consideration for the SFC in making its recommendation David Lussier asked the members of the group to jot down three characteristics that define “neighborhood school” to them. The results were:

- Proximity to school from house (convenience factor)
- Attending school with neighbors

- School is an anchor for the neighborhood
- Walkability (especially for young students)
- Smaller size – more inviting
- Friends are neighbors and neighbors are friends
- Ability to connect
- Pride – strong sense of community
- More manageable size
- Know who is part of your community – safety
- Ability to have easier access to staff/principals
- Close knit - micro community w/in the larger community of Wellesley
- Sense of identity
- Ability to easily go to school grounds/playground outside of school hours
- School with a surrounding area that draws K-5 (operational distinction)
- Access to activities
- Attending one school for 6 years

The comment was made that size can work in both directions. If a school is too small there are drawbacks.

Common Themes among group:

- Proximity & walk ability
- Size of school
- Familiarity

Maps distributed – current attendance zones with walkability (only includes Wellesley households, does not reflect specialized programs, does not distinguish OOD students, and is not “as the crow flies”)

2 standards:	1 mile and ½ mile
Bates –	99% 1 mile, 39% ½ mile
Fiske –	57% 1 mile, 37% ½ mile
Hardy –	69% 1 mile, 36 % ½ mile
Hunnewell –	80 %1 mile, 17% ½ mile
Schofield –	79% 1 mile, 37 % ½ mile
Sprague –	75% 1 mile, 32% ½ mile
Upham –	83% 1 mile, 40% ½ mile

Households expressed by dots on the map –larger size dot for 1 mile, smaller size for ½ mile, white for beyond a mile

1 to ½ mile criteria allows for comparison

Walkability on map is drawn as distances used for bus routes. To determine if a student is eligible for free transportation it is measured from their front door, along a walkable route to the front door of the school. If this measures over 2 miles then they are eligible. This measurement is the same for all schools regardless of age.

Will confirm with GIS how they made their determinations for walkability based on question about Route 9.

Neighborhood Schools:

How are other towns set up? Is Wellesley different?

Districts do different things. Some towns have buffer zones. For example, Newton has buffer zones –within the buffer zone a household can choose which school to go to depending on what space is available.

Q: Open Spaces - Rocky Ledges, Boulder Brook Reservation, Town Forest, etc. - Are these protected land or could they be sold to a developer? Look at the North 40. There has been talk that MassBay may sell land. Are these things taken into account for population growth?

A: There are no guarantees or ways to anticipate the mixed use of land types here in Wellesley. The NRC (Natural Resources Commission) did a study and developed a town-wide map of open land. Mr. Kelley recognized Catherine Johnson, Vice Chair of Planning Board, who was in attendance. Ms. Johnson explained that most of the spaces like the Town Forest and Boulder Brook Reservation are protected. Though private land like Wellesley College, MassBay and Wellesley Country Club have more options. The North 40 was an oddity in that it was indentured but the indenture was removed, allowing Wellesley College to sell it.

Break - Meeting resumed at 8:05

Citizen Speak

- (1) Catherine Johnson – former Fiske parent, kudos to SC and all parents getting involved; offered help from Planning Board. Suggests the SC look deeper into the Cropper report; all structural models are flawed – for example the Cropper report used 35 properties for tear downs – when there were 72 in 2012. Four-five bedroom houses have replaced 2-3 bedroom houses, which doesn't automatically mean there will be multiple children living there but bears looking at. Also suggested the SC and PAC should question all material provided.
- (2) Marina Gil - Hardy parent – Where are the numbers? Estimated savings? What is the impact to school community (parents, teachers and even Emergency responders)? Referred to the California Dept. of Education policies about closing a school (it is the last resort) and some criteria in the process are transparency, including parents in the discussions, and informing what will happen to the property after the school is closed. Appears the decision to close Hardy was made without talking to parents and teachers. She will send the link of the California Dept of Education school closing process to the moderator.
- (3) Sam Goldie - Hardy parent – Referenced Wendy Paul's comment regarding the elementary children being able to stay in the same school for 6 years - the Hardy children will not get that experience.
- (4) Jamie Foley – Where will children be placed during construction? Need to consider the children's elementary school experience and the amount of disruption.

Citizen Speak – closed

Presentation (continued)

Dr. Lussier explained that it is not the charge of this group to engage in re-districting as that won't take place until much later in the overall process. However, having a sense of what the districts might look like based on the recommendation that was made by the FSC (Scenario 1) is helpful.

Distributed maps – this is ONLY a MODEL

Fiske & Schofield remain roughly the same;
Upham, Bates, Sprague and Hunnewell expand

This conceptual map reflects how the Attendance map looked prior to 2001, before Sprague opened

Bates	70% 1 mile, 22% ½ mile
Fiske	57% 1 mile, 37% ½ mile
Hunnewell	82% 1 mile, 20% ½ mile
Schofield	79% 1 mile, 37% ½ mile
Sprague	86% 1 mile, 31% ½ mile
Upham	80% 1 mile, 29% ½ mile

Current Total Elementary Schools – 77% 1 mile, 34% ½ mile

Conceptual Total Elementary Schools – 76% 1 mile, 29% ½ mile

Walkability does not change much from the current attendance zones and the Scenario 1 Conceptual attendance zones

PAC – mile walkability not walkable for younger elementary students

Q: Where in the process will re-districting decisions be made? How early in the process?

A: Many details will need to be considered

Comment: Sprague – nearing capacity – # of WPS elementary households goes from 271 to 299; Large housing developments currently in process will impact capacity of Sprague

Q: With the availability of MAPC and MISCR population projections, what prompted external projection?

A: These 2 sources are not school specific; the internal projections only consider cohort movement, attrition and a few other factors. The reason to go to an outside firm was to consider many more factors. Cropper has national experience and specializes in schools.

Q: 5% change from ½ mile (34 to 29) will that increase traffic in town by 5%?

A: This will be discussed during traffic agenda item

Program considerations for school buildings and capacity:

Enrollment Table – 54 Schools in Comparable Districts

201-299	7 schools
301-399	10 schools
401-499	29 schools
500+	8 schools

Sections –

Less sections create difficulties, little flexibility in a 1 – 2 section school;
3 sections (18 in elementary) with class sizes = grades K-2 @18-21, grades 3-5 @ 22-24;

Sprague and Bates enrollment are approximately 400;

Schofield closed with 18 sections;

Capacity / Enrollment -

MSBA efficient size is 500 students; gives ability over time to adjust (50 year old school); in line with other districts;

Enrollment of 400-499 would have a capacity of 500+;

Q: Is there a correlation between enrollment and performance:

A: Lexington 427 – 523 – higher MCAS scores; Do not see a correlation;

J Graham has been researching the size of schools – pros/cons –

Sweet spot 300-400 students

Stronger community ties

Higher academics

Parent participation

Walk ability

Safer schools

Higher teacher efficacy

When have more than 3 sections per grade- academics and other items start to drop

Wellesley – Families come back due to neighborhood schools

In response to J Graham:

D Lussier – 400 student school is still considered small
Fall within range mentioned – 3 to 4 section school
Sprague & Bates 3-4 section and performed well

Not every grade level will be filled at 4 sections

Benefit to teachers – efficiencies, teachers support, sharing curriculum material

S Kulka - Upham – only 4 girls in kindergarten – no flexibility

Hunnewell – parents feel there is not much flexibility – small school has benefits but there are drawbacks;

I Houghton - Redistricting could solve small school situations but don't need to close a school

T Kennedy – more collaborative with more sections, not just curriculum but can help solve problems by sharing experience

Q: How will the increased work load effect the performance of the principals?

A: They will have support from elementary department heads and coordinators

State now requires frequent but short observations of teachers

Admittedly it will take more time with a larger school

SFC Considerations when Assessing Cost

Matt Kelley

Assessing costs:

SMMA and Daedalus – estimates

Input:

Programming needs-components need (gym, specialized prog)

Target capacity

Other considerations – site,

Output:

SMMA developed a mock up plan listing square footage and submits to Daedalus

Cost per sq ft

Site work cost separated out – for example, cost for removal of ledge at Upham site

Assumed cost date – escalate for each year (3.5%)

Hard cost - construction

Soft cost – overhead, contingencies, HHU 38% soft

SFC considerations:

Scenario meet programming needs, value for money, annual recurring costs

Lifespan – Maintenance over lifespan

SFC wants to determine which is the most financially responsible – don't want to cut costs and lose programming or capacity of facilities

Q: Does the model take into account a facility being closed?

A: The model does not take this into account or renovation projects or available land (sale). If the School Department vacates the building it becomes the property of the town.

Q: Are there material constraints at Hunnewell? For example, are we foregoing programming by renovating rather than building from ground up?

A: The current footprint presents limitations so that is why Hunnewell is being recommended as a massive renovation with an addition; much different from Schofield and Fiske; no compromise to the programming due to addition

Q: Could schools decide a use for the closed school building and state this intention early on in the planning?

A: Unsure

Ms. Hicks – take note of questions and send them to her; bring them to next meeting

Class size, program, Staffing

Specialized programs and after school care

Housing students during construction

Traffic Flow Considerations – Kien Ho - BETA

Conduct Research from a traffic standpoint into the possibility of consolidating any of the 3 schools

An exercise in redistricting for traffic impacts and consider the major traffic routes around the schools;

Route 9 carries 50,000 cars/day

Weston Rd – Rte 9 and 135 – takes to Hardy – 16,000/day

Bottlenecks between Rte 9 and rte 135 from 7:15am-8:15am

2000 cars pass through this intersection at this time

A typical intersection – 1500 cars on a given peak hour

Graded Beyond Level Service F

Central & Wellesley – to Hunnewell – Rte 16 15,000 car trips / Rte 135 (near library) 10,000; Whole Foods 16,000/ Near Newton Lower Falls – 21,000
Largest major arterial near Upham – Rte 9

School Statistics:

	<u>Data Collected</u>	<u>ITE*</u>
Upham:	Total Trips 274	Total Trips 111
Hardy:	Total Trips 254	Total Trips 138
Hunnewell:	Total Trips 287	Total Trips 135

*ITE – Institute of Transportation Engineers – data norms, industry bible

The ITE numbers are much lower than the gathered data, BETA looked into why
Data collection period is important – Rain more driven, fall weather more walkers
In addition to data collection – BETA worked with Deane McGoldrick, WPS Transportation Coordinator

Observations:

At Hardy, cars coming from north (65%), south (35%)
Hardy has a high percentage of student bus ridership
Hunnewell comes from back on dropoff – but Spring Street backs up on trips out

Combining Schools:

Hardy / Hunnewell would not make sense due to intersections already at Level F
Hardy /Upham – few route options, need to get away from intersections
Redistricting – traffic impacted north of Route 9

School Principals provided data for bus, car riders, and walkers:

- Bus Ridership – Fiske and Hardy highest
- Cars – Upham and Hunnewell highest
- Numbers include Hunnewell Learning Center and the Metco buses
- Peak times looked at (7-9 am), normal release, early release, commuting peak (4-6pm) – table shows stats provided for the morning peak because highest volume;

Trade book differences – communities are unique, many additional factors to be considered

For example: Survey was performed at Wellesley High School – why not use the bus?

Response: Inconvenient, expensive

Incentive offered at time school opened – 50% off bus fee, other bus routes/additions –

Initially the buses were full but within weeks buses were empty – still viewed as inconvenient and expensive

Q: Upham has more trips than Hardy and it is smaller – can surrounding roads support the increased traffic?

A: Didn't delve into that level of detail; much more planning is needed

Q: Weston Road/Route 9 – how would redistricting affect this area – not big disparity of car trips between 7-9am and 4-6pm? Wouldn't 200 cars use Weston Road to get to Sprague and Bates? Also 200 trips is a very small part of the 15,000 trips on Weston Road.

A: Yes, the impact is not as significant at 4-6pm as it is in the morning. Sixty five percent of the trips come from the North. With the redistricting most of the 200 cars would not be entering the Weston Road/Route 9 intersection. Some of the trips to Bates would not even cross Weston Road. Weston Road should be a 10,000 car trip road and with 15,000 trips the capacity has been exceeded. Two hundred and fifty trips is small but it is still compounding the problem.

Q: How does drop off and pickup work at Hardy? Does it back up on Weston Road?

A: Pickup backs up onto Weston Rd but drop off does not. It was suggested in past to extend Hardy Road. Also there is no parking at the school so some parents park on side roads and walk over to school. Bus Ridership is high due to a program encouraging families to sign up for the bus.

BETA: In 2009-10 BETA worked on a Weston Road improvement project which included work at the Hardy School. This project did extend the pickup and drop off area.

Q: Weston Road & Central Street – at this intersection 2,000 trips from all roads at peak in the AM– If you could pick the number of cars from upper Weston Rd that enter this intersection how many are there?

A: The total car trips this intersection processes, from all directions, is 2,000. The approximate number of trips from Weston Road is 800. So there would be 250 trips removed from this number of trips.

Anything at the intersection at Weston Road & Rte 9 would involve the Mass DOT. After a lengthy analysis, BETA looked at adding a lane on the Weston Road bridge as it approaches Central Street (work with CSX). If this is not viable then consider the intersection at Weston Road and Linden Street (T intersection). At this intersection we could extend Linden Street down toward Wellesley College.

Review Next Steps

Summary of key questions / concerns

Covered many points – Better space for meeting and more time was helpful

Preview of next meeting:

Going back to proposals on table and pulling apart to evaluate

Programming considerations and what to do with the students during construction? (Agenda items didn't get to tonight)

Pros

Presentation with more interaction
Likes receiving info before meeting
3 hour meeting works much better
Group is very engaged

Cons

{None stated}

Communications:

Upham members met with Principal Dees & will be making a PTO presentation in order to be sure they are hearing from the community, collecting concerns and questions. Encourage other schools to organize events
Ingrid and Maria - Hardy– tried to distribute a letter to parents about meetings and content and was told the PTO wants to remain neutral

Should it be on next week's agenda – a process to be followed by all schools??

May be beneficial to have a single voice of communication – Town-wide solution

Central Council – PTOs

Superintendent's office could blast out all of the contacts, website link, and the meeting schedule as a reminder

Ms. Hicks – email her any concerns or questions and she will reach out and get answers

The committee will have its fourth meeting on December 8, 2015

ADJOURNMENT

At approximately 10:20 pm, upon a motion made by Ms. Paul and seconded by Mr. Bent, the School Committee **unanimously voted** to adjourn.

HHU PAC – Ms Hicks looked for a motion to adjourn – Ms. Fallon made a motion and Ms. Davis seconded the motion, the Committee **unanimously voted** to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Ball

Administrative Assistant to the Asst. Superintendent